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AUTHOR Hoffman, Stevie; Lilja, Linnea D.
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ABSTRACT

A study investigated whether the interrelatedness of parents' storybook reading to children and their developing competence in oral and written language carried over into out-of-home care. Subjects, about 40 children ranging in age from 18 to 36 months in 4 representative daycare centers and their 4 adult teachers, were observed during planned reading events over a 12-week period. Results indicated that storybook readings were not viewed as opportunities for shared language experiences. Storybook readings were a regular part of the curriculum and children were enthusiastic about the activity, but they were neither invited to share their ideas about the story nor encouraged to retell the story. (Six tables and a chart of data are included; 28 references are attached, as well as appendixes including parent questionnaires, report forms, and specific descriptions of the reading environments.) (RS)

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AN ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE TRANSACTIONS WITHIN THE STORYBOOK READING ENVIRONMENT IN SELECTED OUT-OF-HOME CHILDCARE CENTERS

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AN ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE TRANSACTIONS WITHIN THE STORYBOOK READING ENVIRONMENT IN SELECTED OUT-OF-HOME CHILDCARE CENTERS

Introduction

Research findings have provided evidence that shared storybook readings between adults and children are important contributors to both children's oral and written language learning. Correlations between parents reading to young children and the growth of vocabulary and level of linguistic development in these children have been reported in the research literature (Burrough, 1972; Chomsky, 1972; Durkin, 1974; Fodor, 1966; Irwin, 1960; and MacKinnon, 1959). As we have increased our understandings of the similarities between learning to use oral and written language (Bissex, 1980; Chomsky, 1970; Doake, 1981; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Goodman & Goodman, 1979; Graves, 1973; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; Holdaway, 1979; and Smith, 1976), it is not surprising that storybook reading has been found to influence the natural development of children's early reading competence (Clark, 1976; Heath, 1980; and Taylor, 1983).

However, it is not just the fact that children are read or not read to that appears to correlate with language development but the influence of the adult reader's language with the child during the written language

event (Flood, 1977; Heath, 1980; Hoffman, 1983, 1986, 1987; Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Resnick, et al, 1987; Teale, 1984). Each of these studies give further credence to the Guinaugh and Jester (1972) report of qualitative differences in the way adults read to young children. The implications are that the language used by the adult during the reading event, and outside the written text as adult and child expand upon the meaning intent of both the pictures and the text, is what makes a significant difference in children's use of oral language and in their early reading behaviors. Although the research evidence may not yet be "specific with regard to causal relationships between experiences in being read to and the development of literacy in children" (Teale, 1981, p. 908), the literature is powerful enough to prompt educators to encourage parents to read to their children from early on.

Statement of the Problem

The number of young children in group care outside the home, as well as the number of children being cared for within the home setting but not by the parent, continues to increase as a result of the increase in single-parent families and families with two working parents. Although convenience and expense often take on primary consideration in the selection of alternative childcare, parents do want the learning experiences initiated in the home to be furthered and those they may not have time for to be a part of the educational environment of the substitute childcare environment.

One expectation of parents is that the experiences in group care will

continue to foster the development of their children's oral language and stimulate interest in written language use (Hoffman & Kantner, in process). Shared storybook readings are a way in which both oral and written language learning is enhanced. This position is promoted by educators and encouraged through the media and in parent-oriented articles in readily accessible periodicals. Therefore, an assumption can be made that, with attention directed towards the influence of storybook reading on developing literacy, parents expect storybook reading to be part of the childcare educational program. The extent to which children's literature is viewed by prekindergarten teachers as an integral and significant part of a childcare center's language learning curriculum, however, is not evident in the research literature. Perhaps the assumption has been made that teachers use storybook times as planned events for children's language development rather than for entertainment alone.

Purpose of the Research

If the interrelatedness of parents' storybook reading to children and their developing competence in both oral and written language use is known, then it is important to begin to determine whether or not this language learning stimulus is provided for children in out-of-home care during much of their waking day. The purpose of this research effort was to gather baseline data related to the storybook reading environment in representative out-of-home childcare settings. This will enable informed study of the variables within storybook reading events in these centers that have been found to be influencing factors in the relationships between

reading to young children and the children's oral language development and early reading-like behaviors.

Three primary questions guided the research efforts:

1. What is the storybook reading environment of four representative childcare centers in which there are children between the ages of 18 to 30 months?
2. What are the variables in the oral language of the adult readers in these four centers during shared storybook events, especially those variables heard in the language used outside the reading of the printed text?
3. In what ways do the language transactions between the adult readers and the children enable or limit the use of storybook reading as language development opportunity for these children?

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected in four representative childcare centers in a small Midwestern city. Center A is located on the university campus, administered by the Department of Child and Family Development and serves both university and nonuniversity families. Center B is a parent/student center located on the fringe of a university campus and serves only families who are student members of that university. Centers C and D are housed in remodeled homes located close to an elementary school, a small college campus and a few blocks from the downtown area.

These two centers are funded partially from United Way monies; therefore, the population includes children from families eligible for greatly reduced fees. All four centers have childlren from varying ethnic and racial groups.

Each of the four centers divide the children into age-related smaller groups with a lead teacher responsible for the children in her group throughout the day's activities. The adult participants in this study were those four lead teachers of the children who were between 18 to 36 months of age. Their small groups ranged from 7 to 12 children; these became the child participants in the study.

Each childcare center was visited six times during a twelve-week period to observe and code the reading behavior of the adult during a planned reading event, to observe and code children's responses, and to audio-record the adults' actual reading and language outside of the written text. An observation report form (see Appendix A), designed by the experimenters, focused on

1. the general environment and pre-storytelling activities,
2. the specific storytelling setting,
3. the adult story reading behaviors,
4. the children's story-responsive behaviors.

Each data collecting visit was made by one of the investigators and a graduate student trained to observe and code teacher/student behaviors, allowing for two reportings of the storybook reading environment and procedures. Scheduling was arranged to enable each investigative team to collect observational data from each of the four centers. Rater reliability

was found to be unusually high.

Three different storybooks were provided by the researchers for the story events. The first and a subsequent reading of each text were recorded by the two observers at each center. These audio recordings were then typescripted for language data analysis.

The books selected involved animal characters and were introduced in order of increasing difficulty in terms of plot structure and familiarity of concepts presented. Early Morning in the Barn by Nancy Tafuri (1983) has a limited-text in which the continuing storyline is in the illustrations and is found by the reader tracing the travels of a little chick through the barnyard. The printed words describe the sounds made by the various animals seen in the pictures (ex. "moo", "quack," "gobble"). The structure allows for a free interpretation by the reader varying from identification of the creatures to providing a simple or complex individualized storyline. The Box with Red Wheels by Maud and Miska Petersham (1949) follows a specific plot structure with parallel actions. A high level of predictability in the story events allows the reader to make guesses as to what might happen and the conclusion allows for some simple problem solving. The animal characters are all familiar, the child character is small and identifiable to the reader. Let's Pretend by Rose Greydanus (1981) follows a rising action plot line involving children and a dog. The story deals with two concepts (pretending, spying) which may not be familiar to the young reader and would, therefore, encourage discussion, guidance, definition, example or application.

Two additional data resources provided related information. [1] a parent questionnaire regarding the reading environment of the home and the children's background with storybooks (Appendix B); [2] a teacher log for the purposes of recording the readings of all other materials during the duration of the study -- titles of books and poems read, fingerplays used, audio story tapes and records played; whether or not these were adult or child selected activities; and whether the use of literary materials was planned or spontaneous (Appendix C).

Data Analysis Procedures and Findings

From the onsite observational data, a detailed description of the storybook reading environment and the reading language outside the text evolved.

Question One: What is the storybook reading environment of four representative childcare centers in which there are children between the ages of 18-36 months?

The physical environment of each was distinctly different as shown in the observers descriptions of the individual areas. In general, the comments specified that the individual reading areas created an aura of ease even though the physical descriptions ranged from soft, comfortable to bare, tolerable. (See Appendix D for a more complete summary description.)

Before story time, the children were either eating breakfast or

participating in free play. Within these activities general social relationships were shown.

Center A Children were engaged in free play. An abundant number of toys, books, and games were readily available and the children were allowed to make their own choices.

Center B Children were engaged in free play in another room with little or no interchange between the children.

Center C Children spent time in free play, fingerplays and singing with very little interchange among individuals. However, the children tended to touch each other caringly and several attempted to cuddle with the observers.

Center D Children ate breakfast first. After finishing, they sat on the stairs leading to the reading room with books of their choice to read or played with toys. The majority of the children had books. There was little interaction between the children but they shared their book or toys with the investigators.

The children knew it was storytelling time when they were directed to the room and/or specific area in the room where the activity would take place. The routine was fairly well established in that the children immediately sat in a specific arrangement for the story.

Center A The teacher led the children in fingerplays and songs. Each child was seated on individual carpet squares in a circle. The

children were not encouraged to interact.

Center B Children were called into the room for reading time and before being arranged in a tight semi-circle by the teacher, they would take books off the shelves to read. Singing and fingerplays were often used to gain the children's attention.

Center C The children grouped themselves around the teacher who was leading songs and fingerplays until all the students arrived. Once storytime was announced the chidren moved closer, both to each other and the teacher and the book, some even climbing up on the teacher's lap.

Center D The children lined up and walked up the stairs and into the reading room. They sat in a straight line against the wall. Children were not allowed to interact with each other. If they moved closer to the teacher, they were sent back against the wall.

Since the children knew the routine for coming together for storytelling time, it was clear that this was a regular, planned activity of the day, that getting ready to hear a story meant being quiet and sitting where one could see the book which may or may not be close to the teacher.

In all four centers for the initial reading of all books, the introduction consisted of holding the book up and reading the title from the cover. Except for Let's Pretend (Greydanus, 1981), there was no consistent attempt to establish background information for the stories. The introduction became a shared experience less than half of the time and

only when the teachers asked information questions based on the illustrations on the cover, especially for the first book shared, Early Morning in the Barn (Tafuri, 1983). For the subsequent readings, the books were held up basically as a reminder to children about the story.

The children's behavior during reading was consistent in that they tended to move to get closer to or see the book better. Interactions between the children and the children and the teacher, however, varied from a physical distance maintained to instances of touching or sitting on the lap of the teacher.

Center A Children became quite involved in the reading of the books. They participated by talking and pointing to the pictures. If a child moved too close they were reminded to move back only if another child could not see.

Center B Children touched each other and the teacher touched them during the actual reading of the books. The children showed obvious anticipation to the reading of the book as well as continuance of story time.

Center C Children moved continuously but the whole purpose was of seeing the pictures, listening better and getting closer to the teacher.

Center D During reading time the children were attentive. If they moved up to see the pictures, the teacher pushed them back. The teacher's comment often was "You can't see if you sit by me."

Other examples of children's responsive story reading behaviors illustrate that storytelling time was a time for listening and responding in a short and literal fashion when questioned. The specific behaviors tallied occured more than once in the books read. When the response happened during only one reading a X is noted. When it appeared in two to four readings a * is recorded, and for five or more a ● is used.

TABLE I

Patterns of Children's Responses

Style of Response	Center A	Center B	Center C	Center D
STYLE OF RESPONSE				
Apparent		X		
Implied				
Non-attending				
Active	●	*	X	
Passive			X	*
Excited	●	●		
Indifferent				
Anticipating	●	●		
Interested	●	*	*	*
INITIATION OF RESPONSES-TEXT				
Teacher directed	●	●	*	●
Ad lib	*	*		
Ad lib	*	*		*
INITIATION OF RESPONSES-ILLUS				
Teacher directed	●	●	*	●
LENGTH OF RESPONSE				
Short	●	●	*	●
Extended	*			

TABLE I

Continued

Style of Response	Center A	Center B	Center C	Center D
FORMAT OF RESPONSE-TEXT				
Questions	*	X		*
Comments	*	X	*	*
Indistinguishable				
Interjections	*	●	*	*
FORMAT OF RESPONSE-ILLUS				
Questions	*	X		
Comments	●	*	*	●
CONTENT-TEXT				
Text related	●	*	*	●
Story related	●	●	*	*
Out of the story event		X		
Personal			X	X
CONTENT-ILLUS				
Naming objects	●	●	●	●
Observing details	●	*	*	*
Seeing relationships	*	*		
Hypothesizing	X		X	
Relate to personal experience	X		*	
FORM OF RESPONSE				
Literal	X	X	*	●
Interpretative	●	●		●
Prediction	X			
Elaboration	*			
Connective		*		*
Misunderstanding				
Evaluative	X			
Creative	*	X		

The pattern for children's responsive behavior during story telling time was clearly teacher directed with children's responses being short, literal, related to the text or specific items in the illustrations, questions and comments and exemplifying interest.

The style of storytelling was strongly book supported with literal, story-related material used by the teachers.

TABLE II

Adult Story Reading Behaviors

Story Reading Factors	Center A	Center B	Center C	Center D
TEXT FACTORS				
Verbatim	●		●	●
Edited	*	X		
Readers	●	*		*
PAGE BY PAGE				
Use as structure	●	*	●	●
Physical use	●	*	●	●
RAPPORT				
Eye contact	●	*	●	●
Touching		*	*	
CUES				
Literal	●		X	●
Interpretative	*	X	X	*
Prediction	●	X	X	
Repetition	*	X		X
Elaboration	●	*	*	
Relationships	*	X		*
Misunderstanding				
Evaluative				
Creative				
Answers own cues	*	*		●

TABLE II

Continued

Story Reading Factors	Center A	Center B	Center C	Center D
WAIT TIME				
Short	*	*	●	●
Adequate	*	X		
STYLE OF RESPONSES TO CHILDREN				
Positive	*	*		●
Negative				X
Accepting	●	●	*	*
Correcting				
Ignoring	*		X	X
Rejecting	X			*
TYPE OF RESPONSE				
Verbal	●	●	●	●
Non-verbal	●	*		
EXTENT OF RESPONSE				
Simple	●	●	●	●
Extended		X		*
FORMAT OF RESPONSE				
Questions	X	X	*	●
Statements	●	●	●	●
CONTENT OF RESPONSE				
Text related	X	X	●	*
Story related	●	●		●
Out of story event	X			
Personal				X

The teachers' storytelling techniques involved reading the text verbatim with some elaboration. The greatest number of cues provided were literal in nature, followed closely by interpretive style questions. Their responses to children were verbal, text-related, simple statements.

The storytelling time concluding process was abrupt. In most cases the book was simply closed and the children were directed to another activity.

TABLE III

Teacher's Story Concluding Process

Story Concluding Factors	Center A	Center B	Center C	Center D
LENGTH				
Immediate	●	●	●	●
Short		X	X	
Extensive				
CONTENT				
Review				
New directions	X			*
Other reading experiences		X		X
None	●	●	●	*
ENDING BEHAVIORS				
Close book	●	●	●	●
Re-look at book			X	
Ask questions				X
Invite comments			X	
Redirecting act	*	X		
FOLLOW-UP				
Implied				*
Stated				
Activity	*		●	
Encourage own		X		
Suggest re-reading or other reading		*		*

The way in which the activity ended implied that there was little awareness about the need for or understanding of the extension of literary

response through language activities such as re-telling, re-looking, or discussing the story. Storytelling was a scheduled, one-style event which, when time was up or the book was finished, was stopped in order to begin another activity which usually had no connection to the storybook.

The children, on the other hand, constantly wanted more, reached for the book, and asked for the story to be re-read. The teacher responses varied but were in most cases not related to the story told.

At Center A, children participated in fingerplays and large muscle activities often related to the story. Then they were led to other activities.

At Center B, at least two books were read each time, but they, too, were followed by free play.

At Center C, the teacher led fingerplays and sang songs not related to the story and then directed them to a specific activity or free play.

At Center D, the children were encouraged to play with toys, even though a couple did "read."

The students were satisfied and enthusiastic about storytelling experiences but there was no continuing attempt to encourage the child to respond freely to the stories prior to, during, or after the activity.

Logs given to the childcare center personnel were intended to give self-report data on the extent of the literary environment in which the children participated. However, the information was provided in a sporadic way and no firm conclusions may be drawn.

TABLE IV

Record of Log Entries

Activities/Books Noted	Center A	Center B	Center C	Center D
PLANNED ACTIVITIES				
Stories	20	27	4	15
Poems/fingerplays	16	0	9	15
Audio-tapes	3	2	6	7
SPONTANEOUS ACTIVITIES				
Stories	46	21	2	25
Poems/fingerplays	6	0	13	10
Audio-tapes	6	0	0	0
DRAMA ACTIVITIES	0	0	1	2

No comparison between schools can be made since some provided more complete information than others. It can be noted, however, that stories and poems are included in the day's activities in these selected childcare centers.

Question Two: What are the variables in the oral language of the adult readers in these four centers during shared storybook events, especially those variables heard in the language used outside the reading of the printed text?

Each of the storybook reading events was audiotaped to record the adult's reading of the written text, the development of an oral text in those books where the written text was limited, the language outside the written or created text, and the language used in response to the chidren's comments and/or questions. These recordings were then typescipted for

coding of the language transactions, using a modification of the procedure established in the previous research of Hoffman (1982).

The storybook reading event was considered to begin when the adult indicated it was time for stories and set the stage for the particular book to be read; continued through the complete reading of the text; and ended when attention was drawn away from any further book activity. The typescripts were marked to indicate these three components: (1) the language transactions before the actual sharing of the story; (2) the language used during the body of the printed and picture text; and (3) the language heard in the concluding of the story event. After verification of the accuracy of each typescript, three trained research assistants coded all of the language data, individually and separately from one another. They then met with the researcher who had also coded all of the data. In the few instances where there was not complete agreement among the coders, the experience of the researcher was the determining factor in final coding decisions.

The coding process provides a means by which the language of the adult readers can be placed into perceived meaning intent categories with consideration given to adult-initiated and adult-responding dialogue. Where more than one sentence carries the same meaning, the language is coded as one variable. For example: "What's that? What is it? Can you tell me what that is?" is coded as one use of the variable labeled interrogation question.

Adult Initiated Dialogue

- 1. Interrogation questions: expect "right answer" response, usually one word response and often "yes/no" expectation
+ 2. Request questions: used for clarification or confirmation
+ 3. Invitation questions: promote prediction or elaboration
- 4. Insistance comments: repeat directions, "nagging"
- 5. Direction comments: tell how to do, what to do (or say)
+ 6. Information comments: provide relevant clues or explanations
+ 7. Invitation comments: encourage prediction/risk taking

Adult Responses

- 1. Ignores comments or questions (nonverbal behavior)
- 2. Corrects/rejects interpretations or predictions
+ 3. Provides additional clues/information
+ 4. Promotes or provides further elaboration
+ 5. Promotes prediction/risk-taking
+ 6. Confirms or supports predictions or interpretations
+ 7. Values efforts
- 8. Takes control

These uses of language are viewed as positive or negative in enabling children to become an active language participant in the reading event. This is noted by the + or - marks before each language category.

The language of the children was then coded and categorized in the following ways:

Child Initiated Dialogue

+ 1. Request questions: used for clarification or as confirmation
+ 2. Information comments: Provide personal elaboration, prediction, interpretation.

Child Response

- 1. Gives expected response: "yes", "no", "correct" answer
- 2. Repeats adult/other children or text as read by adult
+ 3. Provides additional information
+ 4. Provides personal interpretations/predictions

Upon completion of the coding process, adult and children language variables were charted for each of the storybook events in each of the four centers. These data are presented with numerical notations and percentages, where appropriate and significant, for each of the variables heard in the language transactions.

TABLE V

Language Variables of Storybook Events

[see next four pages]

Language Variables of Storybook Events - A

Language Variables	Book One		Book Two		Book Three	
TEACHER A INITIATED DIALOGUE	first	second	first	second	first	second
-Interrogation Questions	31 23%	23 31%	8 20%	8 23%	11 18%	3 .07%
+Request Questions	2	1		2	3	
+Invitation Questions						
+Invitation Questions						
-Direction Comments	10 .09%	3	5 12%	3	5	10 25%
+Information Comments	66 49%	35 48%	13 33%	15 43%	33 53%	21 52%
+Invitation Comments						
TEACHER A RESPONSES						
-Ignores	1	3	5 13%	3	3	3
-Corrects/rejects	7	2				
+Provides Additional Cues						
+Promotes Elaboration						
+Promotes Prediction						
+Confirms/supports	15 13%	5	6 20%	3 11%	6 11%	3
+Values Efforts	3	1	2	1	1	
TOTALS	135	73	39	35	62	40
CHILD INITIATED - CENTER A						
+Request Questions					1	
+Information Comments	1					
CHILD RESPONSE - CENTER A						
-Expected Response	18 58%	10 61%	8 59%	3 71%	2 42%	3 50%
-Repeats	10	7	2	2	3	2
+Additional Information	12 40%	10 39%	7 41%	2 29%	6 50%	5 50%
+Personal Interpretation	7	1				
TOTALS	48	28	17	7	12	10

Language Variables of Storybook Events - B

Language Variables	Book One		Book Two		Book Three	
TEACHER B INITIATED DIALOGUE	first	second	first	second	first	second
-Interrogation Questions	20 28%	20 25%	22 28%	12 17%	6 17%	7 25%
+Request Questions	4	2	2	5		1
+Invitation Questions			2			
-Insistance Comments						
-Direction Comments	4	5	1	3	4	2
+Information Comments	32 44%	39 48%	35 45%	40 56%	20 57%	15 53%
+Invitation Comments						
TEACHER B RESPONSES						
-Ignores		4	1	1		2
-Corrects/rejects	1			1		
+Provides Additional Cues						
+Promotes Elaboration						
+Promotes Prediction						
+Confirms/supports	9→15%	10→15%	14 18%	16→13%	5 14%	1
+Values Efforts	2	2		3		
-Takes control						
TOTALS	72	81	77	71	35	28
CHILD INITIATED - CENTER B						
+Request Questions	3			1		
+Information Comments		1	2			1
CHILD RESPONSE - CENTER B						
-Expected Response	13→83%	9→74%	17→82%	8→81%	1→50%	4 57%
-Repeats	16	11	1	5	2	
TOTALS	35	27	22	16	6	7
+Additional Information	2	1 22%				
+Personal Interpretation	1	5	2	2	3 50%	2

Language Variables of Storybook Events - C

Language Variables	Book One		Book Two		Book Three	
TEACHER C INITIATED DIALOGUE	first	second	first	second	first	second
-Interrogation Questions	6 .09%	11 18%	7 .09%	4	6 16%	4 18%
+Request Questions	3	5	5	2	2	1
+Invitation Questions		1				
-Insistance Comments						
-Direction Comments	10 54%	5 45%	2 24%	2 30%	1	2
+Information Comments	37	27	18	6	22	6
+Invitation Comments						
TEACHER C RESPONSES						
-Ignores	6 10%	2	11 15%	2	3	8 36%
-Corrects/rejects	1					
+Provides Additional Cues	2		1		1	
+Promotes Elaboration			1	1		
+Promotes Prediction						
+Confirms/supports	2	9 15%	19 26%	2	2	1
-Takes control						
+Values Efforts	2			1		
TOTALS	69	60	74	20	37	22
CHILD INITIATED - CENTER C						
+Request Questions	5 47%			2 20%	1	1
+Information Comments	4	3	3	1		
CHILD RESPONSE - CENTER C						
-Expected Response	4 53%	8 77%	9 70%	9 60%	4 87%	4 90%
-Repeats	6	12	3		3	5
+Additional Information		3	2	3		
+Personal Interpretation						
TOTALS	19	26	17	15	8	10

Language Variables of Storybook Events - D

Language Variables	Book One		Book Two		Book Three	
TEACHER D INITIATED DIALOGUE	first	second	first	second	first	second
-Interrogation Questions	38 36%	25 35%	13 30%	3 16%	13 25%	8 23%
+Request Questions	3	3	1		5	1
+Invitation Questions						
-Insistance Comments						
-Direction Comments	7	6	4	4	2	
+Information Comments	22 21%	13 18%	14 32%	7 37%	21 40%	11 32%
+Invitation Comments						
TEACHER D RESPONSES						
-Ignores	17 29%	13 32%	4 12%	3 21%	4 17%	12 41%
-Corrects/rejects	14	10	1	1	5	2
+Provides Additional Cues						
+Promotes Elaboration						
+Promotes Prediction						
+Confirms/supports	4	1	5	1	2	
+Values Efforts						
-Takes Control						
TOTALS	105	71	43	19	52	34
CHILD INITIATED - CENTER D						
+Request Questions	1 16%	8 24%			1 53%	4 36%
+Information Comments	7	9	4 16%	3 60%	7	1
CHILD RESPONSE - CENTER D						
-Expected Response	29 69%	32 65%	13 75%		3 33%	5 50%
-Repeats	5	14	5	2	2	2
+Additional Information	7 15%	5 11%			2	2
+Personal Interpretation		3	2			
TOTALS	49	71	24	5	15	14

Question Three: In what ways do the language transactions between adult readers and the children enable or limit the use of storybook reading as a language development opportunity for these children?

Three research-based assumptions led to this third question raised in this study:

1. The language behaviors of the adult during shared storybook readings indicate how the adult perceives the use of storybooks as a language learning experience for young children.
2. The language of the adult during storybook events indicates the adult's belief about children's understanding of and abilities to use oral language in response to the storybook.
3. The language of the adult reader either enables or limits children's participation in the storybook event, thereby having positive or negative influences on the children's use of oral language during the event.

The first characteristic of the adults' storybook reading strategies noted in the typescripts of the audiotapes, and in the observational onsite data, was found in the introduction and conclusion of each of the reading events. Books were introduced with the title embedded in an informational comment: for example, "We have a new book. It's called Early Morning in the Barn"; "I have a new book that we haven't looked at before called Let's Pretend"; "I'm going to read this one. It's called The Box with Red Wheels." There was no discussion with the children about predicted content although each of the adults used the Let's Pretend title to tell the children something about the meaning of the word pretend. One

example is illustrative: "What does it mean when you pretend? ----- likes to pretend that he's a fireman when he's outside. We've been pretending a lot."

The conclusion of the books provided no invitation for the children to talk about the story, to retell it in any way -- in other words, to share in the exchange of meanings between the author's text and the children's interpretations. Teachers ended the event with statements such as these: "It's a nice book;" "Did you like it? I did, too;" "What do you want to do now?;" "How about that? You like that story;" "The end." In the instances when children asked to "read it again" or initiated comments about the story content, the adult responses were, for example, "some other time" or "that's nice" or statements which provided additonal information for the children rather than encouraging them to share ideas.
Sample comments include: "Lots of new words for us in this book --- spies, that's a new word to us. We do a lot of pretending but we call it dramatic play;" "I'm glad you paid attention to our story. That makes me very happy."

The language used in these two components of the story event, the introduction and conclusion, gave clear indication that adults viewed the storybook reading as "teacher-read/tell, children listen". The absence of adult invitation for children to join in the reading event leads one to believe that the use of storybooks as a language learning experience for young children was not part of the curriculum agenda.

This interpretation of these data is supported further in the analysis of the language variables used by both adults and children outside the

actual text and during the body of the story content. The first book, Early Morning in the Barn by Tafuri, is a story told primarily through the illustrations and necessitates the creation of a text by the reader rather than relying on the author's written text. Wherever it appeared that a text was being created by the adult, those sentences were not coded as language outside the text. The nature of this book undoubtedly contributed to the greater number of coded language episodes even though the total reflected only that language which did not seem to have the intent of a text.

The second and third books, The Box with Red Wheels by the Petershams and Let's Pretend by Greydanus, contain a specific plot structure involving a predictable sequence of story events written in third person which allows the reader to participate in the action as it is written and also add their own interpretations and experiences to the story presented.

Four variables were found to be important considerations when the connections to the research assumptions underlying the third question for this study were made. The following tabulated data provide a summary of the relationship of these four variables to the total number of language episodes for each storybook event in each childcare center: two teacher-initiated variables -- the use of interrogation questions and the use of information-giving comments; and two children-response variables -- providing an expected response and repeating the words of the adult, other children, or the text.

TABLE VI

Relationship of Four Variables to Total Language Episodes

[see next two pages]

Four Variables/Total Language

Language Transactions	Book 1				Book 2				Book 3			
TEACHER A AND CHILDREN												
Combined total	183		101		56		42		74		50	
Teacher total	135	74%	73	72%	39	70%	35	78%	62	84%	40	80%
Children total	48	26%	28	28%	17	30%	07	22%	12	16%	10	20%
Teacher: Interrogation/Information Giving	94	72%	58	79%	21	53%	23	66%	44	71%	24	53%
Children: Expected-response/Repeating	28	58%	17	61%	10	59%	05	71%	05	42%	05	50%
TEACHER B AND CHILDREN												
Combined total	107		109		99		87		41		35	
Teacher total	72	67%	81	74%	77	78%	71	85%	35	85%	28	80%
Children total	35	33%	27	26%	22	22%	16	15%	06	15%	07	20%
Teacher: Interrogation/Information Giving	52	72%	59	73%	57	73%	52	73%	26	72%	22	78%
Children: Expected-response/Repeating	29	83%	20	74%	18	82%	13	81%	03	50%	04	57%

Four Variables/Total Language

Language Transactions	Book 1				Book 2				Book 3			
TEACHER C AND CHILDREN												
Combined total	88		86		91		35		45		32	
Teacher total	69	78%	60	70%	74	81%	20	57%	37	82%	22	69%
Children total	19	22%	26	30%	17	19%	15	43%	08	18%	10	31%
Teacher: Interrogation/Information Giving	33	55%	38	63%	25	25%	10	30%	28	75%	10	45%
Children: Expected-response/Repeating	10	53%	20	77%	12	70%	09	60%	07	87%	09	90%
TEACHER D AND CHILDREN												
Combined total	154		142		67		24		67		48	
Teacher total	105	68%	71	50%	43	64%	19	79%	52	78%	34	71%
Children total	49	32%	71	50%	24	36%	05	21%	15	22%	14	29%
Teacher: Interrogation/Information Giving	60	57%	38	53%	27	62%	10	53%	36	65%	19	55%
Children: Expected-response/Repeating	34	69%	46	65%	18	75%	02		05	33%	07	50%

The two teacher-initiated variables that have been paired in the charts usually carry contradictory coding values: interrogation questions are considered to have a negative influence on children's use of language while informational comments of the adult are considered to have a positive influence. This has been consistent in Hoffman's previous research where paretns were reading with young children who were beginning readers themselves. The use of the information comment tended to provide the young reader with a cue which enabled continuance of the reading process without further assistance from the adult. However, in this study, where the languaging of the adult was studied in relationshp to how it enabled or limited children's use of oral language, the repeated use of this language variable limited children's opportunities to join into the storybook reading event. The following discussion of the charted data will direct attention to what we believe to be an educationally significant finding in our research.

The tabulated data show that, with the exception of two of the storybook readings, the percentage of teacher-initiated and responding language ranged from 64% to 85% of the total number of combined teacher-children language transactions. Including all of the adult language variables, teacher language averaged 76% of all of the conversations outside the story text. Going a step further in the analysis, we can see that the percentages of "teacher talk" coded as interrogation/information giving variables, ranged from 53% to 79% in this combined category, and, even when including the three readings in which these variables were used less often, they were used by teachers in over 60% of their initiated

dialogue with children.

These numerical notations are of particular importance as one considers the children's language responses to the adult reader or to the storybook text and its pictures in the combined readings. Out of the 15% to 36% of coded "children talk," 50% to 73% of their language was coded as variables labeled expected response or repeated language response. In other words, teachers asked questions, children supplied the expected response. For example: "What is this?"; "A cow." Or, teachers told what was happening in the picture or text, the children repeated: "The rooster says 'cock-a-doodle-do,'" "Cock-a-doodle-do" was the repeated response.

Two other findings are relevant to this discussion: the teachers' use of supporting/valuing comments and the use of correcting/rejecting and ignoring language and behaviors. The language variables that indicate confirmation and valuing of the children's response language were used almost entirely when the children provided the expected response or repeated the teacher and text language. Often the supporting language used was that which "parroted" back what a child had said. Valuing the students' responses were statements such as "Good job!" and "That's right." On the other hand, and noted particularly in Centers C and D reading events, children's initiated dialogue (questioning and informing) ranged from 16% to 60% of their language opportunities; yet, the adults' ignoring and rejection language behaviors ranged from 12% to 41%. In those instances when children tried to initiate a dialongue about story content, the adults' responding language tended to be negative.

One final chart points out the combined relationships of teacher and

children language used in these twenty-four storybook reading events.

Chart A

Language Transactions Across Centers, Children, Books

Language Transactions	Total	Percentage
Combined total of language variables (teacher and children)	1863	
Combined total of teacher language	1354	76%
Combined total of children language	509	27%
Combined total of teacher interrogation and information-giving initiated language	866	64%
Combined total of children initiated language	144	28%
Combined total of children expected response/repeating language responses	336	66%
Combined total of teacher rejection/correction or ignoring language	156	12%
Combined total of teacher supporting/valuing language	149	11%

Summary of Findings

1. Storybook reading events were a regular, planned activity of the day in the childcare centers.

2. Storybook reading was done in a specified area with children sitting on the floor in an established pattern. The children, in all cases, tended to move closer to the teacher and book during the reading time. In two centers this was accepted; in the third, it was accepted if it did not interfere with others; in the fourth, the children were sent back to their original places and, therefore, maintained physical distance from the teacher.

3. The introduction of new books consisted merely of showing the cover, reading the title, and opening the book to begin the reading.

4. Children were enthusiastic about storytelling time and always wanted it to continue by hearing the story again, looking and re-looking at the book, telling the story themselves or sharing other books. In three of the centers two unconnected books were read at each session but there was no attempt to encourage further experiences with either book.

5. The story concluding process was abrupt in that in most cases the book was simply closed and the children directed to another, non-related activity.

6. Language outside the written or created text was initiated primarily by the adults (73% of the time) with interrogation questions and information-giving statements comprising 64% of the language variables

used by the adults.

7. The children's language responded to perceived teacher-language intent in 66% of their responses (expected and repeated language).

8. Children-initiated dialogue (144 notations) appeared in 28% of the language episodes.

9. However, a large number of teacher responses (156) were rejection/correction or ignoring behaviors, heard most often following children-initiated questions or comments.

10. The teachers' confirmation/supporting/valuing comments (149) were heard most when children responded with expected or repeated language and then, to a large extent, teachers used the children's words (parroting) as confirmation.

Discussion and Educational Implications

Although we do not doubt that the children and the adults in these twenty-four reading events enjoyed the shared storybooks, the findings do not indicate that storybook reading was perceived as part of the children's language development curriculum, a position so supported throughout the research literature. Reading to children must, of course, maintain its pleasurable factors; yet, shared readings must be used as a natural language-in-use experience for youngsters.

Furthermore, the data in this study evidence, once more, that it is the adult's language outside the written or created text which enables or

limits children's use of their own language to talk about different or new ideas and to recall other experiences to make the story text personally meaningful. We must agree that it is not whether or not children are read to that makes a difference in their development of oral language, and their natural growth towards literacy, but how they are read to. Children must be encouraged to be partners in the literature event; be invited to talk about what they know, think, feel and to ask questions about what they do not understand; and be assisted in making connections bewteen oral and written language use. Storybook reading can foster both communicative and linguistic competence in children. It is only through using language that one learns language.

The surprising absence of invitations to children to talk about the storybooks at the end of the reading event and the lack of children's retellings of the stories (or their favorite part of a story) give strong support to our conclusions that storybook readings were not viewed as opportunities for shared language experiences for the children in this study. In the recent reading research literature, questions related to comprehension have led to a renewal of studies in this area, some of which are looking at retellings in relationship to reading comprehension. From our position, children's retellings are not only an important means for them to share their understanding of the texts but are an equally important factor in consideration of the influence of storybook language on children's oral language development (Hoffman & Lilja, in review). Additionally, there is reason to view children's retellings as directly related to their use of reading-like behaviors at very young ages and early

literacy development (Hoffman & Lilja, in process).

Three education "musts" are apparent to us as a result of our findings:

1. Research must be disseminated to teachers in ways that make possible their learning why and how to use the knowledge gained from the findings. Workshops need to play a role in such dissemination. They can provide time for inservice teachers to be assisted in developing improved language strategies during storybook readings so as to take advantage of the use of children's books as a valid component to the language arts curriculum This becomes increasingly important for teachers in pre-kindergarten centers where parents depend upon these teachers to help continue the growth of oral language competence in their children.

2. Teacher educators have a responsibility to insure that preservice teachers have knowledge and understanding of the influence of storybook reading on young children's oral and written language learning. Field experiences, then, must provide opportunities for the student teacher to develop appropriate and skillful strategies in using storybook readings as language learning experiences for children.

3. All educators must continue to help parents know the importance of shared storybook readings with their children -- and from early on! At the same time, we must demonstrate the hows and whys of reading for fostering children's oral language and emerging literacy development.

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APPENDIX A

Observation Report Form

Date _____
Center _____
Initials _____

Physical environment Description of general classroom and storytelling areas.

Social environment Description of role relationships.

Time

Preliminaries
What activities are happening before the reading event?

How do the children know it is storytelling time?

What do the children do?

How do they occupy the specified space?

T = teacher
Ch = children
O = objects
S = seat/chair

READING EVENT

Time

<u>Introduction</u>

Where is the book?

How is the book used as a part of the introduction?

What part of the book is used in the introduction?

cover title opening the book title page pages within the book author

How is background information established? prediction literal

Is the introduction a shared experience?

<u>Physical aspects</u>

Where is the teacher? _____distance(feet) _____height(inches)

_____posture _____relation (to book)

Are there instances of touching? _____teacher-child _____child-child

How close are the children to the book? _____(ft/in) _____change?

What attitude is displayed through behavior? excited indifferent
anticipating ready to listen

Story reading behaviors - adult

Vocal qualities pitch speed volume interpretation consistency

Text factors verbatim edited reader's

Process considerations
Read page by page use as structure physical use

Establishes rapport eye contact touching

Cues literal interpretative prediction repetition elaboration relationships misunderstanding evaluation creative answers own cues

Wait time for children's reponse _____too short (-3 sec) _____adequate(+3 sec)

Reader responses to children
Style of response positive negative accepting correcting ignoring rejecting

Type of response verbal non-verbal

Length of response _____time simple extended

Format of response questions statements

Content of response text related story related out-of-story-event happenings personal

Time Story concluding process
Length immediate short extensive

Content review new directions other reading experiences none

Ending behaviors close book re-look at book ask questions invite comments redirecting act

Time Follow-up text related: implied stated activitiy encourage own suggest re-reading
non-text related: implied stated activity encourage own suggest other rdg

Story reading behaviors - children

<u>General responses</u>

Style of response apparent implied non-attending active passive
excited indifferent anticipating interested

<u>Verbal responses</u>

Initiation of response teacher directed ad lib

Length of reponse short extended

Format of response questions comments indistinguishable interjections

Content text related story related out-of-the-story-event happenings personal

Form of response literal interpretative prediction elaboration connective
misunderstanding evaluative creative

<u>Picture-reading response</u>

Format of response questions comments

Content naming objects observing details seeing relationships hypothesizing
relating the picture to personal experience

Initiation of response teacher directed ad lib

Time <u>Story-concluding process</u>

Implied attitudes satisfaction enthusiasm uncaring dissatisfied

Observable behaviors re-read clap hands "wants more" reaches for book
relaxing physical enjoyment response making connections
moves away from activity

Time

General overall comments

APPENDIX B

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

DATE _____

Please share with us information about the storybook reading events you have with your child by checking those statements that apply to your family situation and by responding to the "short answer" questions. Thank you for your time and responses.

---- Reading storybooks to my child is a planned daily event.
When is this usually done? _____.
---- Reading storybooks to my child occurs only when he/she asks.
Often _____ Now and Then _____ Seldom/Never _____.
---- My child enjoys storybook reading.
---- My child chooses to look at books alone.
Often _____ Seldom _____ Never _____.
---- My child joins in the reading of favorite books (talks about the pictures; "reads" along in familiar places).
---- My child is just a listener during storybook reading.
---- My child has a personal collection of books.
Many _____ Some _____ Few _____.
---- My child likes to receive new books.
---- I get books from the library for my child.
Regularly _____ Sometimes _____ Seldom/Never _____.
---- Other s (besides the person answering questionnaire) read to my child.
Family Members _____ Relationship to Child _____
Non-family Members _____ (sitters, for example)
---- My child has records or tapes with stories.
---- My child enjoys listening to these records or tapes alone.

What are your child's favorite stories or books?

Now, please share with us the adult reading experiences in your home.

---- The adults in our family like to read for pleasure.
Often _____ Sometimes _____ Seldom/Never _____.
---- The adults in our family read because of career needs or student needs.
---- The adults in our family have a personal collection of books.
Fiction _____ Nonfiction _____ Reference _____.
---- The adults in our family read a daily newspaper.
---- The adults in our family read magazines or journals.
Regularly _____ Sometimes _____ Seldom/Never _____
---- The adults in our family borrow books from the library.
Regularly _____ Sometimes _____ Seldom/Never _____

Does your child see you (or other family members) read for pleasure? _____

Does your child see you (or other family members) read work/school related materials? _

What reading materials (or what special books) have you enjoyed the most during the last year?

Although a limited number of questionnaires were returned from Center C, the numbers tend to indicate the fact that the participants in the study came from homes in which the children see adults reading a variety of materials for diverse reasons. They have already been exposed to realizing the value of the reading process.

TABLE VII
Parent Questionnaire
Description of General Home Reading Environment

Questionnaire Descriptor	Center A	Center B	Center C	Center D
Adults read for pleasure	7	6	2	4
Adults read for career/educational needs	7	5	1	5
Adults have personal collection of books	7	6,	1	2
Adults read daily newspapaer	7	3	1	1
Adults read magazines/journals	7	6	2	4
Adults borrow books from library	7	6	1	3
Child sees adult reading	7	5	2	5
Number of questionnaires	7	6	2	5

Additionally, most of the children owned personal books. They came from home environments which included story reading occasions which the parents perceived as enjoyable and have time to voluntarily look at books. Storytelling, as practiced in the home, was not a new experience for the children.

TABLE VIII
Reading at Home to the Child

Questionnaire Descriptor	Center A	Center B	Center C	Center D
Storybook reading is a planned daily event	6	5	2	5
Storybook reading happens only when child asks	4	3	0	3
Child enjoys storybook reading	7	6	2	5
Child chooses to look at books alone	6	5	1	4
Child joins in the reading of books	6	5	2	5
Child is a listener during reading	1	0	0	0
Child has a personal collection of books	7	6	2	4
Child likes to receive new books	6	6	2	5
Child acquires books from the library	5	5	1	4
Child has records/tapes of stories	4	5	2	5
Child enjoys listening to records/tapes	2	2	1	5
Others (non-parents) read to the child	7	6	2	2
Number of questionnaires	7	6	2	5

APPENDIX C

INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IN THE STORYBOOK READING ENVIRONMENT LOG

Column 1 — Titles of books read during planned storybook reading time(s).

Column 2 — Titles of books read during spontaneous storybook reading time(s).

Column 3 — Titles of planned poems and fingerplays used.

Column 4 — Titles of poems and fingerplays used spontaneously.

Column 5 — Titles of planned audio story tapes and/or records played.

Column 6 — Titles of audio story tapes and/or records played spontaneously.

Column 7 — Titles of stories read or told that are dramatized. Please note whether these were planned or spontaneous events.

Column 8 — Other participations: Please note the when and what of any follow-up activities originating with the reading of a book and whether or not a child or children choose to look at books alone or with another child (for example, during free activity time).

THE T/C COLUMNS ARE TO NOTE WHETHER THE CHOICE ORIGINATED WITH THE TEACHER OR CHILD(REN).

APPENDIX D

SPECIFIC DESCRIPTIONS OF ENVIRONMENT

Center A This specific room is shared with children below one year of age. The space is split by two gates and heavy bookshelves which form a partial wall. Another wall is half windows which look out on the playground. Part of the classroom is carpeted. Bookshelves are filled with toys and books, three small tables, and one large table, a sink and water facilities are in the area. Bathroom and office are adjacent to the room. One wall has windows of one-way glass in front of an observation booth which has headphones for people to use when watching the children. The walls have child art works arranged on them. One window inside the classroom has a dragon painted on it.

Center B The reading room is an uncluttered area on the main floor of an old house. It has two windows, no chairs, three bookshelves with mostly toys but some books, thin carpet, and shapes with birthdays and children's names noted as decoration on the walls.

Center C The storytelling area is located on the second floor of a comfortable old house. The room is moderately sized with a bay window with curtains. The furniture includes a bean bag chair, large throw pillows, two child sized chairs, a rocking chair, small table, several book racks and shelves filled with toys, cubbies for children's individual belongings and a display unit filled with books. There is a shag rug on the floor. Nature charts, newsletters, and a birthday worm decorate the walls.

Center D The reading room is on the second floor of an old, comfortable house with three windows, no curtains, and a thin carpet on the floor. Cots are piled up against one wall. The room is furnished with three small chairs, one table, and two bookcases. (The bookshelves are too high for the children to reach.) These books are arranged by topic. Children tended to pick up books in the hallway from a bookcase just outside the reading room. There was a chart of birds on the wall and two fingerplays written out on hand-printed posters.